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The Southern Frontier

We dedicate ourselves to the task of doing the most and the best that can be done here and now.

VOL. V JULY, 1944 NO. 7

HERE AND THERE IN THE SOUTH . . .

Politics

The Board of Registration of Houston County, Alabama, approved the names of 39 Negroes as qualified electors. No Negro has cast a ballot in that county in more than 25 years.

Georgia's "white" primary election held on July 4 was free from racial disturbances, despite the fact that qualified Negro voters presented themselves at polling places throughout the state. The denial of this right to vote will become the basis for a court test of the Georgia Democratic Party's action, as permitted under the laws of that state. Significant in the Georgia campaigning was the virtual absence of inflammatory "white supremacy" and "race superiority" issues. Every candidate who raised such an issue was defeated.

Health

The Joan Glancy Memorial Hospital in Duluth, Georgia, is Gwinnett County's only hospital. The hospital was made possible through the benefactions of A. R. Glancy of General Motors. General Glancy gave the hospital on the condition that every resident of the community would share in buying the land. They did. The Negro community furnished all of the materials and labor to complete the Negro ward. At the hospital's dedication services held on July 9, a Negro minister gave the opening prayer.

Religion

Dr. D. P. McGeachey, prominent Presbyterian minister, speaking at the Presbyterian General Assembly held in Montreat, N. C., said:

"We shut our eyes, we Southern Presbyterians, to matters like the race problem. We see the little huddle of black men sitting in one corner of our auditorium and at a separate table in our dining room and we will not hear the agonized whisperings that sometimes come from their lips. The 3,000 or 4,000 Negroes who belong to the Presbyterian Church, South, are probably as docile as it is possible for human beings to be, but even they are alive to some realities. Our Committee on Social and Moral Welfare is right in trying to see the danger of swinging too far to the right or the left, but we are all wrong in being complacent over the situation. There is among us during these days at Montreat a brother who did not hesitate to say, 'Down in our state the time for shootin' has come and I'm willin' to fire the first shot.' And the man who said that was no ignorant backwoodsman."

Labor Relations

The Dan River Cotton Mills at Danville, Virginia, broke a long established rule of all-white labor in cotton mills and hired twenty Negroes as machine operatives. Three thousand white operatives immediately went on strike. Yet an equally large cotton mill in Georgia has successfully introduced Negro operatives—with no trouble.

The white and colored laundry workers of Atlanta who, late in 1943, struck for wages higher than those of 16 and 18 cents an hour they were then receiving, have been awarded a minimum hourly wage of 30 cents by the Regional War Labor Board.

Approximately 500 workers at the Virginia Bridge Company in Birmingham stopped work in protest of the presence of two Negro workers in a rivet line usually composed of white men only. The company makes section bridges for the Army.

Child Labor

The shortage of agricultural labor in the South is reflected in the report of nine Negro children who were transported from Charleston, S. C., to Grandy, N. C., to harvest the potato crops. Their ages ranged from 11 to 13 years. The youngsters were paid 7½ cents a basket for potatoes, and they filled from 5 to 21 baskets a day. They "were supposed to support their own selves." According to the Charleston *News-Courier*, "They were housed in two tents, one boy and three girls in one, and five boys in the other. They slept on straw and spent most of the money they made for food—pork and beans, grits and other commodities from a nearby store." Editorially the *News-Courier* commented, "Even if no federal statute applies, there must be a state law that would protect these children. Unless there is official clarification of this case, and quickly, the functions of the law in the Carolinas must suffer a grievous loss of prestige, and the weak and the young no longer may feel safe under its protection."

Discrimination—Regional

Governor Ellis Arnall of Georgia filed a $60,750,000 freight rate damage suit in the United States Supreme Court against 20 railroads in behalf of the state of Georgia. The suit charged that the freight rate structure imposed on Georgia and the South was "discriminatory and detrimental" and was "the creature of pernicious and sectional politics."

Discrimination—Racial

The Supreme Court of Virginia ruled in a recent decision that a Norfolk Negro teacher who took a seat by white passengers near the front of a city bus was innocent of any violation of the "Jim Crow" law because the driver sought to enforce the law in a "discriminatory manner." In this instance the operator did not request white passengers seated in the rear of the bus to move forward and provide a seat for the colored passengers. The court ruled that the bus driver should have followed "both the letter and the spirit of the law in taking the lead in explaining the situation and in directing its peaceful adjustment."

The differentials in salaries paid to Negro public school teachers became the basis for a ruling by Judge E. Marvin Underwood of the United States District Court in Atlanta. In ruling on the case of Samuel L. Davis, a Negro teacher seeking an injunction to prevent the Atlanta Board of Education from continuing an alleged discrimination against him and other Negro teachers in the matter of pay scale, Judge Underwood ruled that "this court has authority to entertain the suit for declaratory judgment; that the suit is not one against the state and that the state is not an indispensable party; that the acts complained of constitute state action and come within the prohibition of the Fourteenth Amendment."

The Negro Soldier—at Home

Time, the weekly news magazine, carried a significant report on the Negro soldier in its issue of July 10. It was entitled "Unhappy Soldier."* Some of the facts disclosed are significant for Southern communities. They include:

In March, 1944, there were approximately 664,000 Negroes in the Army. Most of them were quartered in the South. The Army, criticized for quartering Negro troops below the Mason and Dixon line, simply stated that it needed "year-round open weather for training."

The results of this policy were significant: "As a group, Southerners insisted that Negroes in uniform keep strictly to the Jim Crow laws. Crowded buses, where the races were forced to mingle, became the scene of ugly flare-ups. In some sections bus drivers toted guns. The South was prepared to back up its Jim Crow

**Time* has kindly granted us permission to quote from "Unhappy Soldiers."

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To attain through research and action programs the ideals and practices of equal opportunity for all peoples in the region.

Editorial

No tears need be shed for the South so long as it continues to give evidence of aggressively working for justice in its everyday life. The events of the past month speak loudly in behalf of this type of action. More Southerners are speaking out in behalf of essential justice for all men in all things. And while this may seem to be the normal thing for any Democrat to do, it must be remembered that many Southerners have been ashamed to appear decent in social relations, especially where these relations have involved the status of colored peoples.

If letters published in the Southern press reflect the voices of the people they indicate at least two facts. First, many more people are expressing themselves openly, frankly, and honestly on matters of social importance by taking the unpopular though democratic points of view. Second, the press is publishing these letters without apology. Both of these facts indicate that some of the seeds of reaction of the South are being swallowed in a slight ground swell of protest, challenge and reform.

The evidence of this changing pattern is not confined to opinion. The primary elections in Georgia were freer from the "white supremacy" issue than were those in Alabama and Florida. It has been said that every primary candidate who raised that issue in Georgia was defeated in the elections. However, it is not to be concluded that the injection of race issues was a cause for these defeats; it may be concluded that the fear of a racial boll weevil did not stop Georgia voters from tending their political cotton. Negroes did not vote in Georgia's "white primary," but they challenged the system by which they were excluded, thereby paving the way for future political action. Rumors of ensuing trouble were ripe before the elections. [illegible] there was no violence.

Nor is the evidence of change confined to matters of protest. Throughout the South this summer there are conferences of men, women, and young people of both races, devoting at least some of their sessions to problems of the region. The Institute of Race Relations at Fisk University, the Student Christian Association conferences of the YMCA and YWCA, official meetings of church groups, labor conferences, youth conferences, and institutes of international relations are providing the real basis for human understanding and constructive social action, they are studying these problems dispassionately and intelligently. Such efforts are conceived in good sense, and they serve as guide posts to significant social action.

It is, perhaps, this new willingness to discuss problems openly and frankly that indicates the opportunity for doing something in the South today. Changes are being made without apology and without calamity. We are using fewer weasel-words in discussing these problems. We are challenging the platitudes of the professional Southerner. We are laughing at the foibles of our demagogues and ridiculing what

(*Continued on Page* 3)

"I Never Knowed"

By MARGARET L. FISHER

It happened . . . and it happened in the deep South. Soldiers were milling in and out of the railroad station. A Negro private on crutches leaned wearily against the smoky yellow wall, his eyes searching for a "Harlem" cab. It was dark and raining and very early in the morning. My white taxi driver looked glum. We drove in silence, then suddenly he began to talk:

You see that colored soldier boy with one leg gone back yonder? Bad, ain't it?

You know, lady, I'm troubled. I'm troubled about the world—and the way things are down here. And I'm troubled about my eight-year-old boy. I tell you the truth, I'm sure mixed up.

Things've been a-worryin' me a long time. Ever since right after I buried my wife last fall. I keep a-thinkin' about somethin' that happen'd, and about the war, and about my boy, and it looks like I just git more and more mixed up . . .

What started me off? Well, I'll tell you.

Me and my boy was drivin' back from down the country where I'd just buried my wife. She was a fine woman, my wife was, and I was feelin' mighty bad and wonderin' what to do with the boy. Somethin' went wrong with the car. I can drive all right, but I ain't much of a hand at engines. Well, we got off the side of the road and I got out and put up the hood. About then a car drove up and stopped, and a colored feller stuck his head out and asked could he help. He was by hisself. I said I sure needed some help, so he pulled off the road and got out and took off his coat and come back to my car and we started to work.

You know what he was, lady? He was a nigger preacher, but he sure knowed about engines. Well, we worked and talked, and he could talk good, too. He was educated. Believe it or not, he could talk better'n me. Honest, lady, *I never knowed* they was a colored man livin' like that preacher. You reck'n they's many like him?

Before I knowed it I was a-tellin' him all about my wife and how bothered I was about the boy and how I didn't just know what to do. And you know somethin'? Yes ma'am, that preacher eased me better'n them white preachers had. He talked about God like he knowed Him. He acted real friendly and I'll bet they wasn't a mean bone in his body. Well, I reck'n we'd been talkin' about my troubles for a long time when he said sorta quiet like that he'd just had word that his boy—the only boy he had—had been killed in the Pacific. That was bad, lady, it sure was. And we talked about his boy, and how he'd worked and saved to send him to school, and about the war . . . and about how awful everything is.

And all the time I was a-thinkin' how I guessed he loved his boy just the same as I did mine, and how his boy died a-fightin' alongside white boys to kill off the Japs, and everybody says the Japs is colored people . . . but the Chinamen is colored, too. Funny, ain't it? Well, . . . it was all mighty sad, lady, mighty sad.

I begun to git hungry and I asked the preacher if he'd eat somethin' outa my box and he said he wouldn't mind. So, we went off the road a little ways and I yelled to my boy. He come up and I said, "Come on, son. Let's all eat somethin'." And what you reck'n he done, lady? He looked at me and he looked at that preacher kinda sassy like and he said, "I ain't a-gonna eat with no nigger." Well sir, you know, it sorta made me mad. 'Twas funny, too, 'cause I'd plumb forgot that preacher was colored. But somehow I felt kinda 'shamed of that youngun, so I said, "Now son, they ain't no need for you to act biggety. This man helped fix up our car so as we could git home. I reck'n you'll have to say you're sorry." But you know, that preacher wasn't mad. He just sorta smiled and said maybe my boy'd like to hear a story. And I'll betcha no youngun ever heard a finer story than that preacher told, and my kid loves stories. Well, before long that boy was a-settin' there with his mouth stuffed full and his eyes a-poppin' outa his head.

When we got done eatin' the preacher left and we come on home. Well, for a spell my boy talked about the colored folks right good. He kept rememberin' about that preacher. Then before long he was comin' in a-talkin' just like that trash that lives around us. And I keep a-thinkin' about the war and that man and his boy and about me and my little boy. And every now'n then I see somethin' like that soldier back yonder. His leg gone and nobody payin' him no mind. Maybe he can talk good, too. Maybe he can talk better'n me. I tell you, I'm all mixed up . . . Looks to me like somethin's bad wrong . . .

Honest, lady, *I never knowed* they was colored folks like that preacher.

Science and The American Race Problem *

By GUY B. JOHNSON

In the broad field of the history of ideas there is no subject more fascinating than ideologies concerned with race, and in our country no problem has produced more conflict and passion than the problem of the relation of the Negro to white America. Since American science is now liberal and democratic, most of us do not realize that it has not always been so. But the truth is that during the great conflict over slavery a hundred years ago American science sanctioned precisely the sort of racial dogmas which Hitler has used as the cornerstone of Nazism. Let us turn back the pages of the history of American anthropological science and read the record in brief.

The great upsurge of democratic ideas during the revolutionary period could not help but have an effect on slavery. Slavery disappeared gradually in the North, and even in the South there was much talk of abolition. Thomas Jefferson, greatest democrat of all, said in his *Notes on Virginia* that he believed "as a suspicion only" that Negroes were inferior to whites in mental endowment. He called for scientific studies of the Negro, and he hoped that ethnology—or anthropology, as we generally call it today—might give an affirmative answer to the question of abolition and the civilizability of the Negro.

Unfortunately, the sincerity and open-mindedness of Jefferson's day were all too soon overshadowed by the rising tide of proslavery thought. The invention of the cotton gin and the opening up of the Deep South increased the South's economic stake in slavery, and the slaveholders turned from half-hearted apology to wholehearted defense of their "peculiar institution." Slavery was justified on grounds of religion, history, and political economy. And finally it was justified on "scientific" grounds, for when American ethnology began to speak on the subject of race, it did not, as Jefferson had hoped, lend comfort to equalitarian ideas. On the contrary, it added the blessing of "science" to slavery.

Perhaps the very existence of slavery and the widespread belief in Negro inferiority acted as a powerful compulsive force which determined the findings of certain scholars. At any rate, the leading ethnological authorities of the nineteenth century took their stand in favor of the theory of plural origins of human races and the unchangeable inferiority of certain races. Opposed to this was the unity theory: mankind began as one race, and racial variations are due to climate or mutation or divine interference. Of course, one could "prove" Negro inferiority under either theory, but one could do it more easily under the plural theory because one could believe that the Negro was and always would be a sort of sub-human race.

Dr. Samuel George Morton of Philadelphia, outstanding American ethnologist of his day and author of the great works on *Crania Egyptiaca* and *Crania Americana*, concluded that "our species had its origin, not in one, but in several or in many creations," and that racial characteristics "are as old as the oldest records of our species." Also he said that his measurements showed the Negro cranium to be smaller than the Anglo-Saxon cranium by twelve cubic inches. What sweet words to those who wanted "scientific" proof of the permanent intellectual inferiority of the Negro!

The great naturalist, Louis Agassiz, liked the plural origins theory, and in 1850 he wrote a paper on "The Diversity of Origin of the Human Races." He believed that "A peculiar conformation characterizes the brain of an adult Negro. Its development never gets beyond that observable in the Caucasian in boyhood. And besides other singularities, it bears a striking resemblance, in several particulars, to the brain of an orang-outang."

Two of Dr. Morton's disciples, Dr. J. C. Nott of Mobile and George R. Gliddon of Philadelphia, were so enamored of the plural theory that they collaborated on two great volumes entitled *Types of Mankind* (1854) and *Indigenous Races of the Earth* (1857). Here are some excerpts from the former work, which went through many editions: "Can anyone call the name of a full-blooded Negro who has ever written a page worthy of being remembered?" "Dark-skinned races, . . . are only fit for military governments. It is the unique rule genial to their physical nature." "Upon the moral and intellectual traits of such abject types no impression has been made within 5000 years; none can be made (so far as science knows) until their organization becomes changed by—silliest of desperate suppositions—a *miracle*." Thus was ethnology subverted into an argument for the perpetual subordination of the Negro.

Emancipation ended the slavery issue, but the old racial theories lived on. In 1868 one of the pluralists read a paper before the Anthropological Society of America with the fascinating title, "Uncivilized Races: Proving That Many Races of Men Are Incapable of Civilization, By An Appeal To The Most Eminent Scientific Naturalists, Explorers and Historians Of All Ages." The speaker sneered at emancipation, harped on the "natural and eternal inequality" of the Negro, and concluded by saying that "The greatest achievement of Anthropological Science, we conceive, will be the speedy convincing of all civilized nations of the utter uselessness of all these old and expensive attempts to civilize uncivilized races of men."

These notions held on with more or less vigor in scientific circles until the end of the past century. Ironically enough, the honor of slaying them goes chiefly to American anthropologists. Today they are *par excellence* the scientific proponents of the idea of the unity of mankind and the potential equality of all races. The late Dr. Franz Boas, grand old man of American anthropology, turned the tide in 1911 with the publication of *The Mind of Primitive Man*, a book which has been called "the Magna Charta of the lower races." In more recent years there has come a veritable flood of literature in refutation of the old racial dogmas. Here are some of the book titles: *The Racial Myth*, by Paul Radin; *Race, A Study in Modern Superstition*, by Jacques Barzun; *Race: Science and Politics*, by Ruth Benedict; *Man's Most Dangerous Myth: The Fallacy of Race*, by Ashley Montagu. Anthropologists readily admit that various peoples may differ in specific temperamental or psychic traits, but they are quite sure that no one race can possibly have a monopoly of "superior" traits. And they agree with Jefferson's creed: "Whatever be their degree of talent, it is no measure of their rights."

In 1938, in the face of the rising tide of Nazism in Europe, the American Anthropological Association in its thirty-seventh annual meeting adopted a resolution deploring the misuse of the data of anthropology in certain countries and asserting that "anthropology provides no scientific basis for discrimination against any people on the ground of racial inferiority, religious affiliation or linguistic heritage."

Perhaps there are some lessons for us in this bit of history. First, even science may make mistakes, but when it is free it will eventually correct its own errors. Second, the "scientific" racial theories of yesterday are the racial myths and superstitions of today. In the hands of demagogues and Negro haters they are still dangerous forces. The challenge to education is quite clear. Third, the problem of race relations is after all a moral problem. There is no better guide than the Golden Rule. Science, after considerable meandering, has now merely joined hands with the Christian ideal of the brotherhood of man and the democratic ideal of equal human rights.

*Reprinted by permission from *The Eleusis* of Chi Omega, November, 1943.

Editorial—*Continued*

we know to be their preposterous proposals. Furthermore, while the nation has made the region's problems its own, the South is coming to regard any solution to its problems as significant for the nation. It is on this basis of understanding that constructive social action is now being conceived and planned.

The SRC seeks to promote this increasing awareness of problems as a basis for state and local action in the fields of human, economic and political relations. There is no magic involved in achieving an alive, alert and aroused South. The formula is only that you and I be the someones who start things—and keep them going. The faith is here; the works must follow.

Here and There In The South

(*Continued from Page* 1)

laws with force. On at least one occasion an 'uppity' Negro soldier bus-rider was shot dead. There was discrimination at every turn."

The attitude of Negro citizens toward Negro soldiers was frequently indifferent and sometimes as antagonistic as that of the whites.

"On D-day there was all kinds of talk about democracy. But two days later white men with guns refused to allow Negroes to vote in the Columbus (Ga.) city primary."

"The Army had never wanted or hoped to solve America's race problem. That was a job for the nation, and it would take years. All the Army hoped to do was to make and keep its civilians in uniform good soldiers for the duration."

In early July the situation was better than it had been, but still bad. There had been sporadic brawls and outbreaks in Mississippi and Alabama.

Yet it could have been worse. "To the credit of efficient soldiers and intelligent civilians, tension in Negro troop areas has recently been relieved rather than increased. The Army has provided better housing and recreation, and segregation is less of an irritant. Even extremists might agree that the situation is better now than a year ago."

"The Negro soldier today, called upon to fight and on occasion to die for a democracy he is not fully allowed to enjoy, is still an unhappy and embittered man."

The Negro Soldier—Abroad

General Eisenhower says of the Negro soldier, in a War Department message to Walter White of the N. A. A. C. P.: "Negro troops did their duty excellently under fire on Normandy's beaches in a zone of heavy combat and suffered substantial casualties. You may well be proud of the accomplishment of Negro troops. In conjunction with all our forces in the European liberation campaign they have made their full contribution to the initial success."

The Post-War Rural South

The Southern Tenant Farmers Union at its tenth convention in Memphis urged the following program for rehabilitation of the post-war South:

1. Repeal of the poll-tax laws, extension of the franchise to all citizens; extension of social-security provisions to all workers; amendment of the National Labor Relations Act to include farm workers; adoption of a special wage and hour measure to cover farm labor.
2. A minimum of "40 acres and a steel mule" for all small farm operators.
3. A new land policy for the region.
4. Adoption of a federal farm ownership act.
5. Opening up of new lands to homesteaders.
6. The conversion of Southern Army and Navy camps into small towns with part-time industries and subsistence farming.

Party Platforms and the Negro

The platform of the Republican Party as adopted at the National Convention contains the following statements relative to racial affairs:

We unreservedly condemn the injection into American life of appeals to racial or religious prejudice.

We pledge an immediate congressional inquiry to ascertain the extent to which mistreatment, segregation and discrimination against Negroes who are in our armed forces are impairing morale and efficiency, and the adoption of corrective legislation.

We pledge the establishment by federal legislation of a permanent fair employment practice commission.

The payment of any poll tax should not be a condition of voting in federal elections and we favor immediate submission of a constitutional amendment for its abolition.

We favor legislation against lynching and pledge our sincere efforts in behalf of its early enactment.

The Democratic Party platform has less to say on the subject:

We believe that racial and religious minorities have the right to live, develop and vote equally with all citizens and share the rights that are guaranteed by our constitution. Congress should exert its full constitutional powers to protect those rights.

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People has issued the following statement signed by Walter White, Executive Secretary, regarding the section dealing with the Negro in the Democratic platform:

"To call the section on the Negro a plank is a misnomer. It is best characterized as a splinter. Badgered by professional bigots from the South and dictated to by Northern political machines more interested in votes than principle, the Democratic mountain labored and brought forth a mouse of evasion by merely asserting that rights guaranteed under the Constitution exist and that Congress 'should exert its full constitutional powers to protect those rights.' When the Fourteenth Amendment was ratified in 1868 it said better what the Democratic Platform of 1944 asserts.

"The Platform says nothing regarding the Fair Employment Practice Committee, the poll tax, lynching, mistreatment of Negroes in the armed services, discrimination in employment or segregation.

"It is little comfort to know that the Democratic Convention did not go further and yield to the Southern demand for a 'white supremacy' plank, restoration of the two-thirds rule, and repudiation of the Supreme Court's decision in the Texas White Primary Case .

"Neither party platform on the Negro is satisfactory to intelligent Negroes."

An Anthropologist's View

"For many years scientists have looked for conclusive evidence that black men or yellow men are born different in intelligence or ability from white men, and today they still lack proof of such difference. Yet white men believe that such differences exist. They believe that black men or yellow men are inherently different or inferior in part because such a belief is an apparent justification for the prejudice they feel and the injustice they commit. To deceive our consciences we invert the truth. We say that we treat the Negro as inferior because he is inferior. The truth is that we think the Negro to be inferior because we treat him as inferior. It is the act that is the father of the thought. What really lies in the social order, for which we are responsible, we push off into the biological order, for which we are not responsible. What is in the biological nature of man is there to stay, and is none of our business. Science, a false science, becomes the mythology of the modern man. It must be true, so we think, that Negroes' skulls close early upon their brains, for we treat Negroes as if that were the case. It is not the case, and every competent student knows it to be untrue. Nor is it true that the Negro is necessarily handicapped by the fact that Africa is only a few generations behind him. If this were true, then it would be true that the descendants of Englishmen would be handicapped as compared with Greeks or Egyptians by the fact that barbarism is only a few generations behind them. A child of one skin color starts even with a child of any other skin color, if you let him. We don't let him, and we entertain a false biology which seems to justify us."—*From an address delivered by Dr. Robert Redfield, Professor of Anthropology and Dean of the Division of Social Sciences at the University of Chicago, at the Jubilee Meeting* (1944) *of the Foreign Missions Conference of North America, Chicago, Illinois.*

Mr. Pilcher's Gift

A students' reference library of 2,000 volumes was recently presented to Southern Normal School, a college preparatory school for Negroes at Brewton, Alabama, by J. Mitchell Pilcher of Montgomery as a memorial to the late Dr. S. Lloyd Brooks, who was for many years superintendent of Southern Normal School.

Mr. Pilcher, a social worker and writer who is interested in race relations, has initiated a movement to ask the Alabama Legislature to pass a bill authorizing the librarian of the Department of Archives and History to establish "a Negro Reference Service for the purpose of furnishing bibliographical, research and reference assistance to interested persons and organizations with respect to the needs, problems, interests, activities, and attitudes of Negroes in Alabama."